

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING NEEDS

A combination of three approaches has been used to assess and identify park and recreation needs:

1. Standard-based
2. Demand-based
3. Resource-based

Standard-Based Criteria for Parkland

Houston is significantly short of parkland based on traditional standards and in comparison with most other major Texas cities. The old rule-of-thumb used to estimate the amount of parkland needed has been 10 acres per 1,000 population plus at least an equal amount of acreage in parkways, large parks, forests and the like, either within or adjacent to the city. For many years, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) further refined this rule-of-thumb into the following standards.

TRADITIONAL NRPA STANDARDS	
Park Type	Recommended Acres per 1000 Population
Neighborhood	1.25 to 2.5
Community & Linear	5 to 8
Regional, Metro	15 to 20
Total	21.25 to 30.5

The NRPA standards are echoed by the Urban Land Institute, which recommends 25.5 acres of parkland per thousand residents.

While the NRPA no longer espouses “one-size fits all” national standards as explained below, it is still noteworthy to compare Houston’s current parkland acreage with the “old” national standards. As shown below, total park acreage within Houston, inclusive of Harris and Fort Bend County parks and private/semi-public lands, is just over 35,000 acres.

EXISTING HOUSTON PARKLAND					
Park Type	Acres provided by City	Acres provided by Counties	Private/Semi-public park acreages	Total	Acres per 1000 Pop.
Neighborhood	773	46	350	1,169	0.6
Community	2,046	103	627	2,776	1.5
Regional, Metro & Special Use	17,718	13,256	81	31,055	16.6
Total	20,537	13,405	1,058	35,000	18.7

The traditional NRPA standard of 21.25 acres per 1000 population would suggest that Houston have at least 39,749 acres of parkland based on a total estimated population in 1997 or 1,870,533. The resulting deficit between what Houston should have (39,749 acres) and what it does have (35,000 acres) is 4,749 acres. While this figure provides an

initial barometric-type reading, it should not be used as the principal determinate of Houston's parkland needs. Instead it justifies the need for further investigation as discussed herein.

Currently, the City's park system provides about 11 acres per thousand persons based on the current population. Inclusion of private and semi-public parkland improves the ratio just slightly to 11.5. If Harris County and Fort Bend County parkland is also included, the ratio improves to 18.7, but the Counties' largest parks also serve tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of persons residing outside the City's corporate limit. Comparative ratios for each geographic sector of Houston are provided below.

EXISTING PARK ACRES PER 1000 RESIDENTS BY SECTOR						
Sector	City Acres	County Acres	Semi-Public Acres	Total Acres	Population	Ratio
Central	3595	278	73	3946	408,430	9.66
Southeast	1250	446	156	1852	269,275	6.88
Southwest	1795	233	250	2278	430,667	5.29
West	10,783	12,100	164	23,047	347,252	66.37
Northwest	461	0	40	501	221,124	2.27
Northeast	1934	38	0	1972	116,703	16.90
Far Northeast	719	310	375	1404	77,082	18.2
Total	20,537	13,405	1058	35,000	1,870,533	18.7

Listed below is data for Texas' other major cities in comparison to Houston.

PARK SYSTEM ACREAGES OF OTHER TEXAS CITIES			
City	Population	Park Acres	Acres/1000
Austin	523,352	14,583	27.9
Dallas	1,006,877	21,642	21.5
Fort Worth	490,200	9,813	20.0
Houston	1,870,533	20,537	11.0
San Antonio	1,068,600	6,809	6.4

Sources: Fort Worth Park, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan (1998)
San Antonio Parks and Recreation System Plan (1998)

While comparisons to traditional standards and other cities are informative, they should not be used as the sole criteria to assess Houston's park needs. Several factors must be kept in mind including:

- Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) manages many miles of major drainageways and attendant floodways that might otherwise be included in the City's linear park acreage. With approximately 113 miles of bayou within the City limit at

an average width of 250 feet, this acreage would total more than 3,400 and substantially cut the NRPA calculated deficit.

- Houston is somewhat unique in the extent of existing private park and recreation facilities as indicated above and identified in the inventory analysis. This is particularly true in major master planned communities such as Clear Lake and Kingwood.
- Not all cities measure parkland the same way. Dallas, for example, includes the surface area of several large lakes in their parkland inventory while Houston does not. Lake Houston is an important regional recreation facility totaling 12,236 acres, but it is not counted as parkland.

As noted earlier, the NRPA has recently moved away from one-size-fits-all acreage standards because of variable local conditions and the desire to better quantify local needs. The new method employs market assessment procedures that are expressed as the Level of Service (LOS). These emerging standards require detailed field analysis and observation of actual daily park and facility use to determine more precisely a community's park and recreation needs. For a city the size of Houston, the task would be daunting. Substantial personnel resources would be required in order to conduct the appropriate level of detailed observation and study at each of the City's 300+ parks. Neither Austin, Fort Worth, nor San Antonio used this methodology in completing their park master plans; all of which were completed and/or adopted in 1998. Nonetheless, LOS standards can provide a more accurate assessment of the need for an individual facility. The City should undertake periodic field studies at selected parks to develop a database for future updates of this master plan. Complete information on LOS is described in the NRPA's 1996 edition of *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines*.

Acquisition of additional parkland should address existing gaps in service pursuant to the park classification system and a standard service area specified for each park type. Service areas are, of course, strongly influenced by: 1) physical constraints, (man-made and natural) such as freeways, major thoroughfares, railroads, bayous and other drainageways, traffic access patterns, and land availability, and 2) the presence and distribution of County, semi-public and private park and recreation facilities.

The absence of a Comprehensive Land Use Plan (i.e. zoning) for Houston presents an additional challenge. Without an enforceable land use plan, it is more difficult to pinpoint future park sites in mostly undeveloped areas, especially those away from current directions of major development. However, large undeveloped areas within the City limit are relatively few. Most new development growth is occurring within the City's five mile extra-territorial jurisdiction; inside the City limit there has been substantial in-fill development and redevelopment. Existing neighborhoods, especially those without enforceable deed restrictions are subject to shifts in land use, and density, but these changes are sometimes difficult to predict. The use of standard-based criteria for land acquisition must, accordingly, be flexible and responsive.

Standard Based Criteria for Park and Recreation Facilities

Nationally recognized quantitative standards for individual recreational facilities are well established. Listed below are those set forth in 1990 by the NRPA and the Texas Outdoor Recreation Plan (TORP). Also included for comparative purposes are regional standards for the Dallas-Fort Worth area followed by averages of the three groups of standards. Each ratio recommends the number of residents to be served per a single facility type.

RECREATION FACILITY STANDARDS				
Facility	1990 NRPA	1990 TORP	Dallas-Fort Worth Region	Average
Competition Softball/Baseball	1:30,000	1:8,500	1:19,600	1:19,367
Competition Soccer Fields	1:10,000	1:13,200	1:7,100	1:10,100
Tennis Courts	1:2,000	1:2,600	1:4,800	1:3,133
Playgrounds	N/A	1:2,200	1:4,400	1:3,300
Community Centers	1:25,000	N/A	1:35,300	1:30,150
Swimming Pools	1:20,000	1:20,400	1:33,200	1:24,533
Golf Courses (18 hole)	1:50,000	1:109,000	1:102,700	1:87,233

The following table provides data on Houston's existing supply of City and private/semi-public recreational facilities along with the resulting population-based ratios using again the 1997 estimate of 1,870,533.

EXISTING RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND RATIOS					
Facility	City		Private/ Semi-Public		Total
	Quantity	Ratio		Total	Ratio
Competition Softball/Baseball	164	1:11,406	N/A	N/A	1:11,406
Competition Soccer Fields	70	1:26,722	N/A	N/A	1:26,722
Tennis Courts	218	1:8,580	165	383	1:4,884
Playgrounds	253	1:7,393	83	336	1:5,567
Community Centers	55	1:34,010	3	58	1:32,251
Swimming Pools	44	1:42,512	94	138	1:13,555
Golf Courses (18 hole)	7	1:267,219	15	22	1:85,024

Recreational facility standards established for Houston should reflect NRPA and TORP guidelines, the Parks to Standard Program, local conditions and public input. In selected areas, county and private facilities will exert a strong influence. Based on these considerations, the Master Plan recommends the following standards:

Competition Softball/Baseball	1:20,000
Competition Soccer Fields	1:10,000
Tennis Courts	1: 5,000
Playgrounds	1: 4,000
Community Centers	1:30,000
Swimming Pools	1:25,000
Golf Courses	1:90,000

The table below compares the average standards, the recommended standards for Houston, and the existing supply ratios as listed above.

Facility	Average Standard	Houston Standard	Existing Supply Ratio
Competition Softball/Baseball	1:19,367	1:20,000	1:11,406
Competition Soccer Fields	1:10,100	1:10,000	1:26,722
Tennis Courts	1:3,133	1: 5,000	1:4,884
Playgrounds	1:3,300	1: 4,000	1:5,567
Community Centers	1:30,150	1:30,000	1:32,251
Swimming Pools	1:24,533	1:25,000	1:13,555
Golf Courses (18 hole)	1:87,233	1:90,000	1:85,024

According to the table, the City appears to have an ample supply of softball/baseball fields, swimming pools and golf courses. Also, most of the private and semi-public sports complexes are comprised of softball/baseball fields. The most severe shortage is the number of soccer fields as further discussed below. While it would appear that tennis courts and playgrounds are also in short supply, the total number of courts indicated above excludes private, for-profit tennis centers and all school facilities. The playground total excludes elementary schools, including the 119 sites developed as school parks under the SPARK program. Including the SPARK sites alone improves the ratio to 1:4,111.

Based on the Houston standard for soccer, the City needs at least 2 times the current number of fields. The following table provides a more detailed needs assessment across the various geographic sectors of the City. The Central Sector, generally defined as inside the Loop, has been further divided into four quadrants.

CURRENT SOCCER FIELD NEEDS				
Sector	Existing Fields	Current Population	Ratio	New Fields Needed Now
Central-northeast	2	52,638	1:26,319	3
Central-southeast	14	137,451	1: 9,818	0
Central-southwest	1	120,918	1:120,918	11
Central-northwest	8	97,423	1:12,178	2
	25	408,430	1:16,337	16
Southeast	16	269,275	1:16,830	11
Southwest	22	430,667	1:19,576	21
West	9	347,252	1:38,584	25
Northwest	9	221,124	1:24,569	13
Northeast	8	116,703	1:14,588	4
Far Northeast	0	77,082	0	8
	89	1,870,533	1:21,017	98

A total of 98 additional soccer fields are needed now just to keep up with the current population. However, Houston's population is projected to grow from 1,870,533 to approximately 1,955,000 by the year 2010, an increase of 124,467. Maintaining the ratio of 1 field per 10,000 residents will require 12 more fields over that same time period. The table below projects total soccer field needs by sector through 2010 based on current growth patterns.

TOTAL SOCCER FIELD NEEDS				
Sector	Existing Fields	New Fields Needed Now	More Fields Needed by 2010	Total
Central – northeast	2	3	0	5
Central – southeast	14	0	1	15
Central – southwest	1	11	1	13
Central – northwest	8	2	1	11
	25	16	3	44
Southeast	16	11	2	29
Southwest	22	21	3	46
West	9	25	2	36
Northwest	9	13	1	23
Northeast	8	4	0	12
Far Northeast	0	8	1	9
	89	98	12	199

The urgent needs for additional fields in portions of southwest Houston is already being addressed through several private sector initiatives discussed in more detail on page 6.33. With regard to far northeast Houston, the Kingwood community is served by several sports field complexes owned and maintained by the Kingwood Services Association.

In response to the readily apparent need for more soccer fields, the Parks and Recreation Department has completed a more detailed investigation resulting in a separate report entitled *Soccer Fields Master Plan*. The report reviews all city and non-city soccer sites within the corporate limit, as well as current user groups including City youth soccer leagues, private youth and adult soccer clubs, and adult soccer leagues with permitted fields. Additional park sites intended for soccer use as identified in the report have been incorporated into the land acquisition needs discussed in this section.

Demand-Based Criteria for Parkland

The public opinion survey conducted as part of the master plan development process indicated a strong desire by Houston residents to acquire more parkland in areas that are currently poorly served. As shown in the public opinion survey results provided in Appendix D, it was one of the top five priorities.

Houston's demand for additional parkland prior to initiation of this master plan is also well documented. In 1983, the Green Ribbon Committee, a citizen's group appointed by local, state and federal authorities, concluded in part that the supply of parkland must be substantially increased. They recommended aggressive acquisition of parkland in growth areas with obvious needs. Over the next ten years, 45 new parks were added totaling about 12,700 acres. Despite the dramatic increase, former Mayor Lanier's Transition Committee on Parks reported in 1992 that the City's developed and maintained park acreage should be doubled. The Transition Committee Report also noted that the distribution of parks and park facilities envisioned by the Green Ribbon Committee has not been achieved, resulting in areas of our city without adequate parks and recreational facilities.

In 1994, a community-wide visioning process was initiated to bring people together to share information and to develop a consensus on the issues, goals, and opportunities that will shape Houston's future. Entitled *Imagine Houston*, the process involved thousands of Houstonians who contributed countless hours. The final report of *Imagine Houston*, completed in 1997, included the following action items:

1. Acquire more land for all types of parks (man-made, developed, and natural), especially more metro (200 or more acres) and regional parks (50-200 acres).
2. Provide incentives for developers to give additional land for greenspace use.
3. Designate open spaces restricted to passive recreation within City and County parks to provide more natural areas for nature watching, walking and greenspace.
4. Support and assist neighborhoods who want to acquire land for parks (to be owned by the neighborhood associations).

The demand for open space within the central city, especially for areas experiencing redevelopment at increased densities has been strongly expressed. Homeowner and civic groups, including the Neartown Association, have spoken out on the issue in public meetings and other forums regarding proposed revisions to the City's development ordinance. The City Council approved plan for the Midtown Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) includes the improvement and acquisition of public parks, improvements, open space corridors along streets, and the conversion of unnecessary streets to pedestrian open space pathways. Similar provisions could be incorporated into other T.I.R.Z. plans.

Other neighborhood groups have also expressed parkland needs as part of ongoing community improvement efforts coordinated by the Neighborhood Services Division of

the Planning and Development Department. Specific areas noted by City staff include Fondren Southwest, Gulfton, Hiram Clarke area (Townwood Park), Stella Link, Acres Homes, and the Glen Lee subdivision near Intercontinental Airport.

Demand Based Criteria for Park and Recreation Facilities

The public opinion survey conducted as part of the master plan development process revealed the top ten city-wide park and recreational facility needs to be as follows:

1. Bicycle, jogging and exercise trails
2. Security lighting
3. Nature areas
4. Community centers
5. Playgrounds
6. Tree plantings
7. Covered picnic pavilions
8. Open play areas
9. Swimming pools
10. Soccer fields

Several mathematical demand-based methods are available to calculate facility quantities. As mentioned earlier, one is the Level of Service (LOS) Standard set forth by the NRPA. A second method is the Outdoor Recreation Capacity Analysis developed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department as part of the 1990 Texas Outdoor Recreation Plan (TORP).

The TORP method employs a series of calculations to determine the number of facilities needed per activity to meet anticipated future demand. The calculations require multiple sets of assumptions and projections integrated with data about existing facility availability, usage, and capacity. Despite all the “number crunching”, the analysis does not consider the geographic distribution within a given area.

Neither method described above has been applied to Houston for several reasons:

1. The City’s immense size and diversity
2. The amount of data needed
3. The extent of data currently available.

While a mathematical basis is not necessarily needed to calculate future demand for facilities such as picnic tables, it would be helpful in determining more precisely the number of athletic fields required. Implementation of a computerized information management system is recommended in order to quantify and track the supply and demand for athletic fields by sport and by season. With this system in place, current and future needs for field sports and diamond sports can be better projected both numerically and geographically.

The demand for certain types of facilities on a park-by-park basis is well defined through the Parks to Standard Program and community meetings associated with each project. Also, an important conduit of information and assistance are the Park Advisory Councils (PAC's). PAC's are park-based advisory groups composed of local citizens representing a wide range of their community that includes churches, schools, government, business, civic organizations, youth, adult and senior groups, media, law-enforcement and service agencies. PAC's have been formed to act as a voice for community based programming to effectively address the needs and objectives of each park community. They help identify community resources for programs and activities, coordinate fundraisers, conduct cleanups, and plan and cosponsor special community events. There are currently 55 Park Advisory Councils located throughout the City. Most meet monthly on a regular basis.

Changes in demand for certain activities have become apparent while inventorying existing park and recreational facilities. Golf courses have increased and more non-city courses are proposed; meanwhile, the demand for tennis appears to be diminishing and a surprising number of courts at private neighborhood parks have been neglected, dismantled, or in a few cases completely removed. The demand for walking trails is readily apparent and has been verified by City staff. The need for additional soccer fields is also readily evident at certain parks including Burnet Bayland and Townwood. Obviously, certain recreational pursuits increase and decrease in popularity over time. A good way to monitor recreational trends is by tracking sales in sporting goods stores.

Resource-Based Criteria for Natural Resources

A major goal of a park planning document should be to identify significant natural resources and seek their inclusion in the park system. Bayous, of course, are Houston's defining natural resource. Early plans for Houston called for a system of parkways along the bayous. This system has only been partially realized. The idea remains popular today. As discussed in the *Imagine Houston* report, bayous should be "*..restored and protected to provide environmental and economic benefits such as: natural and wildlife habitat; water supply; recreation and transportation; stormwater drainage; and scenic beauty*". Many Houstonians, either individually or through organizations such as the Bayou Preservation Association and the Buffalo Bayou Partnership, have undertaken serious efforts to increase public awareness and find opportunities to protect and enhance the City's prime natural assets.

Although significant portions of Houston's bayous are already designated as linear parks either by the City or Harris County, many other areas have yet to be included. Fortunately, most are publicly owned in fee or controlled by easements by Harris County and maintained by the County's Flood Control District. Given the importance of this natural resource, a major objective of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan should be to enhance and enlarge the linear park system along major bayous in cooperation with the County and in coordination with other applicable planning efforts including:

- Recommendations of the Buffalo Bayou Task Force (1986)
- Buffalo Bayou East Sector Redevelopment Plan (1992)
- Comprehensive Bikeway Plan (1993)
- City of Houston Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan (updated annually)
- Watershed Management Plans (prepared by flood control agencies)

Natural resource opportunities also include the San Jacinto River and Caney Creek, upstream from Lake Houston. Attendant floodplains contain extensive wildlife habitats. The opportunity exists to create a wonderful system of soft-surface trails along Caney Creek linking the State park with the Kingwood area.

Resource Based Criteria for Historical Resources

Historic preservation has drawn increased attention in recent years. One example is the current restoration of Allen's Landing. With increased public awareness, additional historic sites and structures will likely be brought into the public domain for perpetual maintenance. (Historic preservation in Texas requires public sector persistence and private sector cooperation.) While this Master Plan does not identify specific historical resource-based sites or structures, pressure for the inclusion of some of these assets in the park system should be expected and accommodated.

CATEGORIES OF NEEDS

Outlined below are Houston's park system needs reflective of the standard-based, demand-based, and resource-based criteria used to assess needs.

- Land Acquisitions
 - New Park Sites, by Type
 - Expansion of Existing Parks
- Park Development
 - Parks to Standard (PTS) Program
 - Metro Parks
 - Linear Park System Delineation and Development
 - Use of Vacant or Undeveloped Sites
- Recreational Facilities
 - Sports Fields
 - Recreation Centers
 - Swimming Pools
 - Golf and Tennis
- Park Maintenance Facilities
 - New Sites
 - Renovation and/or relocation of Existing Sites
- Parks Headquarters

The following table summarizes the needs assessment for Houston. Included is information establishing the basis for each need.

Needs Assessment Summary Table

Need	Location		Basis for Need
	By Type	By Sector	
Land Acquisition			
Acquire 79 new park sites	11 – pocket 46 – neighborhood 17 – community 3 – regional 2 - metro	16 – Central 8 – Southeast 15 – Southwest 16 – West 13 – Northwest 8 – Northeast 3 – Far Northeast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Park standards• Community demand expressed at meetings and in survey results• Joint venture opportunities with other agencies
Expand 20 existing parks	5 – neighborhood 9 – community 3 – regional 2 – linear 1 – metro	6 – Central 2 – Southeast 3 – Southwest 1 – West 2 – Northwest 5 – Northeast 1 – Far Northeast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve park access and visibility• Relieve overuse
Park Development/Redevelopment			
Rehabilitate and restore all existing parks (Parks to Standard Program – PTS)	All types of parks and all geographic sectors included. Phase I (completed) – 81 parks Phase II (underway) – 42 parks Phase III (future) – 150 parks		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Condition of existing parks• Popularity of PTS program• Community demand expressed at public meetings and in survey results
Improve metro parks	Hermann Park (further redevelopment) Herman Brown Park (further development) Keith Wiess (update master plan and implement) Memorial Park (complete new master plan and implement) Proposed northwest site (master planning) Proposed southwest site (master planning)		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing use levels• Protection of natural assets• Assist private sector initiatives• Imagine Houston report
Expand the linear park system	<u>Major Drainageways</u> Berry Creek Brays Bayou* Buffalo Bayou * Caney Creek Clear Creek Greens Bayou * Halls Bayou * Horsepen Bayou * <u>Rails to Trails</u> Harrisburg Trail Sunset Trail		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect and enhance Houston’s major natural areas• *Designated bikeway corridor per Comprehensive Bikeway Plan• Assist private sector initiatives• Utilize former railroad corridors
Improve and/or develop 12 vacant or undeveloped park sites	<u>By Type</u> 1 – pocket 4 – neighborhood 5 – community 2 – regional	<u>By Sector</u> 2 – Central 2 – Southeast 1 – Southwest 2 – West 2 – Northwest 3 – Northeast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing urbanized areas with inadequate parkland• Improve park access and visibility• Soccer field needs

Need	Location		Basis for Need
	By Type	By Sector	
Recreational Facilities			
Build more soccer fields at 28 existing and proposed parks	<u>No. of Sites</u>	<u>Sector</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Resolve conflicts with other sports● Relocate tournament fields out of neighborhood parks● Relieve overuse of existing fields● Meet park standards
	11	Central	
	2	Southeast	
	6	Southwest	
	2	West	
	4	Northwest	
	2	Northeast	
1	Far Northeast		
Construct 10 new recreation centers	<u>No. of Sites</u>	<u>Sector</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Provide facilities in communities and regions currently not served● Meet recreation facility standards
	1	Southeast	
	2	Southwest	
	3	West	
	2	Northwest	
	1	Northeast	
	1	Far Northeast	
Rehabilitate and/or replace existing swimming pools	City wide – all sectors		<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Community demand expressed at meetings and in surveys● Houston’s climate
Construct an Olympic-quality natatorium	Central Sector		<ul style="list-style-type: none">● No such existing facility within City of Houston● Houston’s goal to host 2012 Olympics
Park Maintenance Facilities			
Acquire and construct 7 new facilities; close 5 existing sites	<u>No. of Sites</u>	<u>Sector</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Eliminate substandard facilities in poor locations● Reduce travel times by personnel● Provide adequate levels of maintenance at new parks and rehabilitated existing parks
	1	Central	
	1	Southeast	
	1	Southwest	
	1	West	
	1	Northwest	
	1	Northeast	
1	Far Northeast		
Parks Headquarters			
Construct a new Parks and Recreation Department headquarters facility	Central Sector		<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Existing headquarters has outlived its useful life.

LAND ACQUISITION TARGET AREAS

Following are recommended land acquisitions by park type for each of the City's seven geographic sectors. The lists include new sites and expansion of existing sites. As shown in the table on the following page, a total of 79 new park sites are recommended along with expansion of 20 existing parks. Proposed parkland acquisitions are based on the Parks Standards and influenced by physical constraints such as major streets, railroads and drainageways, and by existing non-City facilities, namely private neighborhood parks. Pocket parks are proposed for areas inside Loop 610 that have higher population densities and minimal undeveloped land. Community parks are recommended for existing neighborhoods with private recreation facilities. Most of these neighborhoods are completely developed; consequently, there is no available land *within* the subdivision suitable for a neighborhood park. Other proposed, new community parks are mostly needed to provide land for additional soccer fields. These sites are individually identified on the sector maps.

The following information is provided for each listed land acquisition need:

- Vicinity (usually defined by location within the major thoroughfare system)
- Key map page
- Super neighborhood identification number
- Council district
- Undeveloped land availability- rated as good, fair, or poor
- Land development activity-rated as high, medium or low

Land availability has been evaluated by reviewing 1998 aerial photography. Land development activity has been evaluated through the following means:

- Building permit data reports prepared by the Planning and Development Department
- Comparison of recent and older aerial photography
- Subdivision platting activity

Comments are provided for many proposed sites to offer additional guidance, especially on expansion of existing parks. Community parks primarily intended for soccer use are also noted.

PROPOSED NEW OR EXPANDED PARK SITES								
Park	Sector							
Type	Central	SE	SW	West	NW	NE	Far NE	Total
Pocket	11							11
Neighborhood	3	7	8	11	8	7	2	46
Community	1	1	5	4	4	1	1	17
Regional	1		1	1				3
Metro			1		1			2
	16	8	15	16	13	8	3	79
Expansion of existing park	6	2	3	1	2	5	1	20

Land Acquisition

Acquiring parkland in a city as large and complex as Houston is a challenging task and one that imposes great burdens on the Parks and Recreation Department staff. Assistance can be expected from the City's Public Works Real Estate Division, but probably not to the extent necessary, especially in light of the parkland needs identified herein. Additional real estate guidance and knowledge is needed. An optimum solution would be the formation of a citizen's advisory group entitled the Park Acquisition Advisory Committee. The committee would be comprised of Houstonians with local expertise in all aspects of real estate. As a group they would offer guidance on land values, availability and suitability of needed park sites and overall development trends. As individuals, they would have contacts with landowners throughout the City, and could provide assistance in negotiating appropriate land purchase prices or possibly, even in seeking donations. Their expertise would be welcome both on new park site acquisitions as well as expansion of existing parks. Their efforts would supplement and be coordinated with those of City staff and the Parks Board.

In certain parts of the City, parkland acquisition is being addressed by City Council approved Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (T.I.R.Z.). Two examples are Midtown and Greenspoint. Both T.I.R.Z.'s include commitments to provide park sites, thus, relieving the Parks and Recreation Department of the responsibility in those select areas.

Potential parkland acquisitions are not limited solely to privately held properties. Public/semi-public agencies, including school districts, utility companies, Harris County, and even other City of Houston departments, hold vacant tracts or surplus lands, or need to acquire lands that could support joint recreational use. Several such sites are identified herein.

An excellent opportunity for joint use regards regional storm water detention sites needed for flood control purposes by the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD). This opportunity is further enhanced by the fact that most detention sites are located along bayous and streams designated as linear parks. (See Figure 6.11.) Detention basins can be constructed as either dry bottom or wet bottom, the latter having a permanent pool of water. To date, the County has built only dry bottom detention basins. Wet bottom detention

generally requires a greater area of land to provide the same acre-feet capacity. Additional excavation is also required to provide adequate pond depth and promote water quality. Either type can provide recreational use. With proper grading, sports fields can be incorporated into dry bottom sites and used except at a high flood stage. Detention basins transformed into ponds offer wonderful settings for passive recreational uses. Joint recreational use of regional stormwater detention sites should be pursued where the sites are highly visible and easily accessed. A perfect example is already underway – the Willow Waterhole park site in southwest Houston. This 250 acre project will have a dual role of providing much needed flood control in the Brays Bayou watershed and much needed passive, regional open space for Meyerland and surrounding neighborhoods. Originally proposed by local residents and civic organizations, the project has evolved into a unique partnership between the private sector, the City of Houston, Harris County, and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Willow Waterhole Park clearly demonstrates how private citizens and multiple government entities can effectively and economically alleviate Houston's most pressing needs by working together in partnership.

Land Acquisition Target Areas - Central Sector

VICINITY	KEY MAP	SUPER NEIGH.	COUNCIL DISTRICT	LAND AVAILABILITY	LAND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY	COMMENTS
Pocket Parks						
N. Main/Airline N. Loop/Cavalcade	453	15	H	Poor	Medium	
Fulton/Irvington N. Loop/Cavalcade	453	51	H	Poor	Low	
West Loop/Railroad Westheimer/Richmond	491	23	G	Poor	Low	Built-out subdivision (Afton Oaks)
Shepherd/Dunlavy W. Gray/Westheimer	492	24	D	Poor	High	Utilize Metropolitan Service Center site
Shepherd/Montrose Westheimer/Richmond	492	24	D	Poor	High	Utilize former library site on Richmond and Mandell
Heights Blvd/Studewood 11 th Street/White Oak Dr.	493	15	H	Poor	Medium	
Montrose/Spur 527 Westheimer/Richmond	493	24	D	Poor	High	
Montrose/Bagby Gray/Westheimer	493	24	D	Poor	High	
Midtown (Multiple Sites)	493	62	I	Fair	High	T.I.R.Z. will be acquiring parkland per Council approved plan
HB&T Railroad/SP Railroad Navigation/Harrisburg	494	63	I	Poor	Low	Existing SPARKS
Harrisburg/ Sunset Trail/Brays Bayou	495	82	I	Fair	Low	Preferably locate on bayou
Neighborhood Parks						
Ella/T.C. Jester W. 11 th	452	14	A	Good	Low	Acquire all or part of wooded H.I.S.D. site
I-45/Lockwood Collingsworth/North Loop	454	52	B	Fair	Low	Existing SPARK
Cullen/MLK Blvd. Griggs/Yellowstone	534	68	D	Fair	Low	Existing SPARK
Community Parks						
West Loop/North Freeway North Loop/Katy Freeway	452 492	14/15	A/H	Fair	Medium	Intended for soccer fields
Regional Parks						
Buffalo Bayou	494	63	H	Medium	Low	Land acquisition adjacent to bayou via Buffalo Bayou Partnership

Existing Parks Under Consideration for Expansion						
Little Thicket Park (Neighborhood)	452	15	H	Good	Medium	Expand southward to front on T.C. Jester
Eastwood Park (Community)	494	63	I	Fair	Medium	Undersized, well-used park in highly populated area
Beech White Park (Community)	533	68	D	Poor	Low	1) Purchase and clear adjoining, objectionable uses 2) Extend Mainer St. to increase street frontage 3) Consider eastward expansion to railroad
Zollie Scales Park (Neighborhood)	533	68	D	Good	Low	Increase street frontage by expanding east to Tierwester and/or west to Peerless, and reclassify as community park; partly intended for soccer fields
Ingrando Park (Community)	535	70	I	Fair	Low	Densely populated area; additional parkland needed
Mason Park (Regional)	535	65	I	Good	Low	Acquire vacant tracts to east for mountain biking

Land Acquisition Target Areas - Southeast Sector

VICINITY	KEY MAP	SUPER NEIGH.	COUNCIL DISTRICT	LAND AVAIL- ABILITY	LAND DEVELOP- MENT ACTIVITY	COMMENTS
Neighborhood Parks						
Scott/Cullen Bellfort/Reed	533	71	D	Fair	Low	Existing SPARK
Telephone/Broadway Bellfort/Airport Blvd.	535	78	I	Poor	Low	Option: Provide SPARK at Lewis Elementary
Monroe/Edgebrook Airport Blvd./Alameda Genoa	575	78	E	Fair	Low	Easthaven Subdivision
Telephone/Monroe Alameda Genoa/Fuqua	575	78	E	Fair	High	Houston Skyscraper Shadows Subdivision
Edgebrook/Beamer Fuqua/South Belt	576	80	E	Good	Medium	Possible site identified
Scarsdale/F.M. 1959 Gulf Frwy/Old Galveston Rd.	577	80	E	Fair	Low	Sycamore Valley Subdivision; provide pocket park as alternative
Scarsdale/Dixie Farm Rd. Beamer/Gulf Frwy.	616	80	E	Good	Medium	Small, existing private recreation site
Community Parks						
Gulf Freeway/South Loop La Porte Freeway/City limit	535	75	I/E	Good	Low	Intended for soccer fields
Existing Parks Under Consideration for Expansion						
Scottcrest Park	573	71	D	Poor	Low	Increase frontage on Airport Blvd. and reclassify as community park; provide soccer fields
Wilson Memorial Park (Community)	576	79	E	Fair	Low	Increase access and visibility on S.H. 3 to serve residents east of highway

Land Acquisition Target Areas - Southwest Sector

VICINITY	KEY MAP	SUPER NEIGH.	COUNCIL DISTRICT	LAND AVAILABILITY	LAND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY	COMMENTS
Neighborhood Parks						
Wilcrest/West Belt Beechnut/Bissonnet	529	25	F	Good	Medium	
Fondren/Hillcroft Harwin/SW Frwy.	530	26	F	Fair	Low	
Fondren/Hillcroft Beechnut/Braeswood	530	30	F	Good	Low	Utilize existing water plant site adjacent to private rec. site
Fondren/Hillcroft Willowbend/Bellfort	530	36	C	Poor	Medium	
West Belt/Gessner Westpark/Bellaire	530	26	F	Poor	Medium	Large multi-family area without park
Fondren/Hillcroft Bellfort/Airport	570	36	C	Poor	Medium	
S. Post Oak/Hiram Clarke Fuqua/South Belt	571	40	D	Good	Low	Possible site identified
Buffalo Speedway/Alameda Airport Blvd./Orem	572	40	D	Good	Medium	Maxie Park inadequate and poorly located to serve quadrant
Community Parks						
Synott/Kirkwood Beechnut/Bellfort	529	25	F	Fair	Medium	Option: joint venture at Alief Sports Assn. site
Gulfton	531	27	F	Poor	Low	Burnett Bayland overused; densely populated area
Chimney Rock/S. Post Oak Bellfort/S. Main	531	37	C	Good	Medium	Willow Waterhole site; joint venture project with H.C.F.C.D.; emphasis on passive uses
West Belt/Brays Bayou Beechnut/Bissonnet	529	29	F	Fair	Medium	Soccer fields needed with neighborhood park amenities
Gessner/Hillcroft Westpark/Bissonnet	530	26	F	Poor	Medium	Intended for soccer fields
Regional Parks						
Kirkwood/West Belt Beechnut/Bellfort	529	25	F	Fair	Medium	Large park for Alief
Metro Parks						
City ETJ – Fort Bend County	611	n/a	n/a	Good	Low	Long-term need (See separate discussion)

Existing Parks Under Consideration for Expansion						
Townwood Park (Community)	493	40	D	Good	Low	Expand to meet current demand for soccer; extend Simsbrook and Waterloo Streets
Cambridge Village Park (Regional)	571	40	D	Fair	Low	Expand to increase exposure on Airport Blvd.
Whiting and Marian Christian tracts	530	36	C	Good	Medium	Combine and expand into regional park to serve Greater Fondren Southwest, Westbury, Braeburn, etc.

Land Acquisition Target Areas - West Sector

VICINITY	KEY MAP	SUPER NEIGH.	COUNCIL DISTRICT	LAND AVAILABILITY	LAND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY	COMMENTS
Neighborhood Parks						
West Belt/Gessner Clay/Hammerly	449	84	A	Poor	Medium	
Gessner/Blalock Clay/Kempwood	450	84	A	Fair	Medium	
Fairbanks N. Houston/NW Fwy Hempstead Hwy/Pinemont	450	4	A	Fair	Medium	
Bingle/Wirt Hammerly/Long Point	451	86	A	Good	Low	Acquire 2 acre neglected private site encircled by streets
Wirt/Silber Westview/Katy Fwy	457	86	A	Poor	Medium	
S.H. 6/Eldridge Buffalo Bayou/Briarforest	488	17	G	Good	High	Possible site adjoining Bush Elementary
Eldridge/Dairy Ashford Buffalo Bayou/Briarforest	488	17	G	Good	High	Could adjoin bayou
Wilcrest/West Belt Buffalo Bayou/Briarforest	489	18	G	Low	Medium	
Kirkwood/West Belt Katy Frwy/Buffalo Bayou	489	16	G	Poor	Low	Built-out area; option: SPARK at Rummell Creek Elementary
Chimney Rock/Sage Westheimer/Richmond	491	21	C	Poor	High	Lamar Terrace TIRZ; check school site
Voss/Chimney Rock San Felipe/Westheimer	491	21	G	Poor	High	Existing SPARK at Briargrove Elementary
Community Parks						
Eldridge/Kirkwood Westheimer/Alief-Clodine	488	17	G	Good	High	Site preferred closer to Alief Clodine
Kirkwood/West Belt Westheimer/Alief-Clodine	489	19	G	Good	High	Site preferred closer to Westheimer; check Andrau Airport tracts
Eldridge/Dairy Ashford Briarforest/Westheimer	488	17	G	n/a	High	Joint venture to retain and improve Memorial Ashford Little League site
Fondren/Voss Buffalo Bayou/Richmond	490	20	G	Fair	High	
Regional Parks						
Hollister/Bingle Kempwood/Hammerly	450	85	A	Good	Low	Possible sites identified
Existing Parks Under Consideration for Expansion						
Glenmore Forest Park (Neighborhood)	451	86	A	Poor	Low	Expand to provide street frontage on Glourie Drive

Land Acquisition Target Areas - Northwest Sector

VICINITY	KEY MAP	SUPER NEIGH.	COUNCIL DISTRICT	LAND AVAILABILITY	LAND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY	COMMENTS
Neighborhood Parks						
Airline/City Limit Aldine Bender/West Rd.	373	2	B	Fair	Low	Site identified by Greenspoint T.I.R.Z. for acquisition
Shepherd/North Fwy. Parker/Tidwell	412	45	B	Fair	Low	
W. Montgomery/N. Victory Shepherd	412	6	B	Fair	Low	Option: provide SPARK at Wesley Elementary
Cebra/W. Montgomery Little York/Tidwell	412	6	B	Good	Low	Existing SPARK
W. Montgomery/Wheatley Gulf Bank/N. Victory	412	6	B	Good	Low	
North Frwy/Airline Parker/Tidwell	453	45	B	Fair	Low	
Fulton/Hardy Toll Road Crosstimbers/North Loop	453	45	H	Poor	Low	Existing SPARK
Airline/Hardy Toll Road Tidwell/Crosstimbers	453	45	H	Fair	Low	Existing SPARK
Community Parks						
Hollister/Railroad Gulf Bank/Little York	411	5	A	Good	Medium	Site preferred on bayou & suitable for sports fields
Antoine/White Oak Bayou Little York/Tidwell	411	5	A	Good	Medium	
North Frwy/Hardy Toll Road Little York/N. Loop	453	45	H	Fair	Low	Intended for soccer fields
White Oak Bayou/Shepherd Gulf Bank/Pinemont	411	6	B	Good	Low	Intended for soccer fields
Metro Parks						
City ETJ – North Belt area, West of North Fwy.	371 373	n/a	n/a	Fair	High	(See separate discussion)
Existing Parks Under Consideration for Expansion						
Jester Parkway (Linear Park)	451	12	A	Good	Low	Expand to include undeveloped, wooded acreage west of White Oak Bayou to railroad, just north of 34 th Street
W. Mount Houston (Community) Park site	411	5	A	Good	Medium	Expand northward to provide exposure on W. Mount Houston Road; reclassify as regional park

Land Acquisition Target Areas - Northeast Sector

VICINITY	KEY MAP	SUPER NEIGH.	COUNCIL DISTRICT	LAND AVAILABILITY	LAND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY	COMMENTS
Neighborhood Parks						
Hirsch/Homestead Mt. Houston Pkwy/Little York	414	47	B	Good	Low	First resolve Hopper Rd. major thoroughfare status
Homestead/Wayside Mt. Houston Pkwy/Little York	415	47	B	Poor	Low	Northwood Manor Subdivision unserved; option: delete Hopper Rd. from Major Thoroughfare Plan & utilize existing R.O.W.
Wayside/Mesa Little York/Tidwell	415	49	B	Good	Low	
Mesa/Oates Little York/Tidwell	415	49	B	Good	Low	
Lockwood/Homestead Tidwell/Ley	454	48	B	Fair	Low	Existing SPARK; Pelham Park is nearby, but across railroad
S. Lake Houston Pkwy Old Beaumont Hwy/Greens Bayou	456	54	I	Good	Medium	Hunterwood Subdivision unserved
John Ralston Rd./Maxey Woodforest/East Fwy.	497	58	I	Good	Low	Utilize portion of Herman Brown Park between Wood Bayou & Holiday Forest subdivisions (if donor allows)
Community Parks						
Homestead/Railyards North Loop/Bennington	494	48	B	Good	Low	Intended for sports complex
Existing Parks Under Consideration for Expansion						
Tidwell Park (Regional)	415	47	B	Good	Low	Expand north of Hall's Bayou to Bretshire to provide neighborhood park site for Fontaine Subdivision
Curry St. Park (Neighborhood)	454	46	H	Fair	Low	Frontage needed on a second street; preferably Schuller Road
Withers Park (Neighborhood)	414	46	H	n/a	n/a	Investigate acquisition of 13 acre tract to east and improve access
Hardy Tidwell (Community) Park Site	453	46	H	Fair	Low	Increase street frontage prior to site development
Herman Brown Park (Metro)	456	58	I	Fair	Low	Expand park to increase frontage on Wallisville Rd. (Consult with Parks Board)

Land Acquisition Target Areas - Far Northeast Sector

VICINITY	KEY MAP	SUPER NEIGH.	COUNCIL DISTRICT	LAND AVAIL- ABILITY	LAND DEVELOP- MENT ACTIVITY	COMMENTS
Neighborhood Parks						
Loop 494/Woodland Hills Dr Kingwood Dr./Hamblen Rd.	336	43	E	Poor	Low	Forest Cove Subdivision
Ley Rd./Eastex Frwy. Rankin/Greens Rd.	375	42	B	Fair	Low	Glen Lee Subdivision (Prior commitment by PARD?)
Community Parks						
Mills Branch/Caney Creek County line/Northpark	297	43	E	Good	Medium	Additional sports fields needed
Existing Parks Under Consideration for Expansion						
San Jacinto Park	336	43	E	Good	Low	Expand to include FEMA buyouts of flood-prone properties

Land Acquisition Target Areas - Metro Parks

Existing City and Harris County Metro Parks are shown on the following page (Figure 6.10). As discussed under demand-based criteria, the *Imagine Houston* report specifically cited the need for more metro parks. In response, the Park and Recreation Master Plan proposes acquisition of two new sites. Their proposed locations will provide a more equitable distribution of metro parks around the perimeter of the City. Figure 6.10 shows the general location of these two sites. The first site is located to the northwest between the North Freeway and the Northwest Freeway. The second site is located to the southwest in Fort Bend County between the South Freeway and the Southwest Freeway. Both sites will probably need to be outside the City limit but within the extraterritorial jurisdiction since suitably large site at reasonable prices are not likely to be available within the City. The northwest park site would best be located in a wooded habitat along Greens Bayou. In contrast, the southwest site could offer a coastal prairie setting.

PARK DEVELOPMENT

Parks to Standard Program

The Parks to Standard Program (PTS) was initiated in 1993 by Mayor Bob Lanier, and followed the Neighborhoods to Standard Program. The ultimate goal of PTS is to bring 277 currently developed parks up to a uniform condition, including typical amenities, security and safety. By restoring city parks to an acceptable standard, the PTS Program has increased park use, decreased criminal activity, and enhanced surrounding neighborhoods.

PTS focuses on the following improvements:

- Community center renovations
- Swimming pool and bath house renovations
- Basketball pavilion improvements
- New playgrounds accessible to all children, including those with disabilities
- Picnic facilities, including shelters, tables, and drinking fountains
- Sports fields and court improvements, including improved lighting
- New trails and walkways, including benches
- Landscape enhancements
- Improved park security lighting
- Site drainage improvements
- Access controls

The first phase of the program is substantially complete and includes 81 parks. Phase II, under the direction of Mayor Lee Brown, is underway and will include 42 parks. Phase III will address the remaining 154 existing, developed parks.

Development of New Sites

A three-phase approach is recommended for developing new, park sites as well as existing, undeveloped sites:

Phase 1:

- Site master planning with neighborhood and/or community input.
- Opportunities for financial assistance from community groups such as civic clubs and homeowner organizations should be identified during this phase.

Phase 2:

- Initial site improvements, generally limited to site grading and drainage, tree plantings or trimming, and turf establishment in accordance with the master plan.
- The initial phase of park improvements should result in an attractive, useable and identifiable park.

Phase 3:

- Facility development in accordance with the master plan.

This three-phase approach is presented with the realization that partial or complete development of a new park will likely require an extended period of time to fund. The introduction of Phase 2 improvements are important in identifying the site as a public park and to precipitate community support for further park improvements.

Metro Park Development Needs

- Proposed northwest site
 - Land acquisition and preparation of a site master plan
- Proposed southwest site
 - Land acquisition and preparation of a site master plan
- Hermann Park
 - Implementation of the new master plan completed in 1995 by the City of Houston and *Friends of Hermann Park* is ongoing
- Herman Brown Park
 - Further development, in accordance with its master plan, by the City of Houston and the Houston Parks Board
- Keith Wiess Park
 - An updated master plan is needed, on behalf of the Wiess sisters, by the Houston Parks Board in partnership with the City of Houston
- Memorial Park
 - City is working with the Memorial Park Advisory Board to develop a master/conservation plan emphasizing natural resources to be protected or enhanced.

Development of Metro Parks will continue to be largely driven by philanthropic donations and other fund raising efforts coordinated by the Houston Parks Board or park-specific organizations. Currently underway at Hermann Park is implementation of the new master plan completed in 1995 by the *Friends of Hermann Park* and the City of Houston. The plan entails a number of park improvement projects to be both privately and publicly funded.

Linear Park System

Linear park development needs are threefold:

- 1) Implement the Comprehensive Bikeway Plan
- 2) Beautification
- 3) Implement the Buffalo Bayou Master Plan

The linear park system is largely comprised of the City's bayous and streams and several former railroad rights-of-way designated as bikeway corridors pursuant to the Comprehensive Bikeway Plan. Bayous are Houston's defining natural resource and public support for their inclusion into a recognized system of parkways dates back to the early 1900's. Bayou-based linear parks should be defined, at a minimum, by the width of the easement or fee strip obtained by the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD). As noted earlier, HCFCD already controls many miles of land along Houston's major drainageways and attendant floodways. Linear parks within the current City limit are listed in the table below and shown on Figure 6.11. Portions of bayous and streams outside the City limit but within its extraterritorial jurisdiction should be designated as linear parks upon annexation.

Linear Park Development along most of Houston's bayous will generally be hike and bike trail construction as authorized in the Bikeway Plan. Amenities will include picnic areas and related furnishings. Beautification through extensive tree planting and other landscaping is also needed along many portions of channelized bayous where the original natural character has been lost to past drainage improvement projects.

Considerably more substantial improvements are planned along Buffalo Bayou within the Loop, the central gem of Houston's linear park system. The Buffalo Bayou Master Plan, under the direction and support of the *Buffalo Bayou Partnership*, envisions a greenbelt with landscaping, pedestrian paths, lighting and directional graphics along the bayou from Shepherd Drive to the Turning Basin. Specific amenity areas would be created or further enhanced along the bayou including wildlife habitat, community parks, and major activity centers. Sesquicentennial Park has already been established as the focal point of bayou redevelopment efforts in the downtown area. Phase I was completed in 1987 and Phase II in 1998. Located adjacent to the Wortham Theater Center, the park is filled with expansive gardens, meandering walkways, and distinctive public art. Also underway within the downtown area, is the redevelopment of historic Allen's Landing to include:

- Bulkhead stabilization and wharf development
- Hike and bike trail development
- Landscaping
- Interpretive elements and commemorative features
- Picnic and recreational support facilities

The *Buffalo Bayou Partnership* is currently pursuing acquisition of several properties adjacent to the bayou just east of downtown. Collectively, these acquisitions are identified as a regional park on the Central Sector map, Figure 6.3. Once assembled, these areas will provide space for sports fields, special events and other recreational activities.

Linear Park	Location	Sector	Council Districts	Bikeway Corridor?	Approx. Miles
Berry Creek	Sims Bayou to Allendale	Southeast	E, I		1.1
Brays Bayou	Dairy Ashford Road east to Mason Park, near the Ship Channel	Central, Southwest	C, D, F, I	✓	
(Upper) Buffalo Bayou	Cullen Barker Reservoir east to West Beltway 8	West	G	✓	26.2
(Lower) Buffalo Bayou	Shepherd Drive east through downtown to the Ship Channel Turning Basin	Central	B, H, I	✓	8.4
Caney Creek	Kingwood East End (Private) Park north to Farnsworth Park	Far Northeast	E		3.2
Clear Creek	Cullen Blvd. east to El Franco Lee Park	Southeast	E		6.0
(Upper) Greens Bayou	North Belt to Hardy Toll Road (Greenspoint area)	Northwest	B	✓	4.5
(Lower) Greens Bayou	Brock Park south to the East Freeway	Northeast	B, I	✓	8.5
Halls Bayou	Keith Weiss Park east to Greens Bayou in Brock Park	Northeast	B, H	✓	9.4
“Harrisburg Trail”	Union Pacific abandoned railroad right-of-way generally paralleling the northside of Harrisburg Boulevard from 65 th Street to Drennan Street	Central	I	✓	1.6
Horsepen Bayou	Clear Lake Park to Bay Area Blvd.	Southeast	E	✓	3.3
Hunting Bayou	Cavalcade Road east through Herman Brown Park to Market Street, just south of the East Freeway	Central, Northeast	B, I	✓	8.4
Keegans Bayou	Synott Road east to Brays Bayou	Southwest	C, F	✓	6.2
Little White Oak Bayou	White Oak Bayou to North Loop 610	Central	H		2.8
San Jacinto River	River Grove (Private) Park west to City limit	Far Northeast	E		5.2
Sims Bayou	South Post Oak east to Milby Park, near State Highway 225	Southeast, Southwest	D, E, I	✓	19.4
Spring Creek	San Jacinto River west to City limit	Far Northeast	E		2.1
“Sunset Trail”	Southern Pacific abandoned railroad right-of-way from Buffalo Bayou at Hidalgo Park to Brays Bayou at Mason Park	Central	I	✓	1.8
White Oak Bayou	Hollister Road east to Buffalo Bayou	Central, Northwest	A, H	✓	14.2
Total:					139.0

Vacant/Undeveloped City Park Sites

Park Site	Key Map	Super Neigh	Council District	Factors to Consider	Recommended Action
Blackhawk Regional Park	575	80	E	Close proximity to Beverly Hills (Community) Park & El Franco Lee (Regional) Park	1) Develop as needed for soccer fields 2) Plan for future extension of Blackhawk Blvd.
Clear Lake Regional Park	617	81	E	Site access severely impacted by drainageways, railroad and petrochemical pipelines	1) Implement site master plan 2) Seek means to improve access and visibility
Edmonds Neighborhood Park	375	42	B	Mostly vacant neighborhood with few homes and businesses	Options: 1) Trade or sell for park use 2) Hold for future grounds maintenance facility to serve NE sector
Forum Neighborhood Park	529	29	F	Substantial multi-family area with no parks	Develop with emphasis on recreational open space
Grand River Neighborhood Park	456	49	B	1) Wooded park site adjacent to elementary school 2) Single family residential neighborhood 3) Lake Forest Park located on west side of neighborhood	1) Mow and maintain equal to other neighborhood parks 2) Postpone facility development
Haden Community Park	450	10	A	1) Urbanized area with insufficient number and distribution of parks 2) Site has excellent access and visibility	Develop
Hardy/Tidwell Community Park	453	46	H	Site is ¼ mile deep with limited frontage on Tidwell	Improve access and visibility prior to site development
Marron(Tony)/North York Community Park	494	63	H	1) Site adjacent to Buffalo Bayou 2) Development recommendations of the Buffalo Bayou East Sector Redevelopment Plan: • Soccer fields • Special event facility for city-wide festivals, concerts and rallies • Boat launching and docking areas	1) Plan in coordination with Buffalo Bayou Partnership 2) Development timing influenced by documented soccer demand
Rossllyn Neighborhood Park	451	4	A	1) Poorly located, small site 2) Nearby neighborhood is well served by Forest West Park	Trade or sell
Sand Canyon Community Park	528	N/A	N/A	Excellent site with streets on all four sides but located in ETJ	Hold for development pending annexation

Shiffick Pocket Park	493	24	D	High density inner city neighborhood with inadequate parks	Enlist neighborhood support and develop as a prototype pocket park (only 3,500 s.f.)
Stuebner Airline Community Park	412	6	B	1) Site with good frontage on major thoroughfare 2) Residential neighborhoods east & south of site unserved by parkland	Develop first as neighborhood park to serve adjacent residential areas including Hidden Valley
Waldemar Neighborhood Park	489	18	G	1) Highly developed single family and multi-family area 2) Numerous private recreation sites but no developed public parks	Minimally develop with primary emphasis on providing recreational open space
West Mount Houston Community Park	411	5	A	1) Wooded site with poor access	Improve access and visibility prior to site development
Withers Neighborhood Park	414	46	H	1) Site has poor access 2) Shady Lane Park is 1/3 mile to south, across Hall's Bayou	Enlarge site as feasible to improve access

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

The following facility needs are addressed herein:

- Soccer fields
- Recreation centers
- Swimming pools
- Golf
- Tennis

Soccer Fields

Existing Conditions

As discussed earlier under Standards-Based Criteria, Houston needs almost 100 more soccer fields in order to meet the recommended standard of one field per 10,000 residents. However, the need for additional fields is also evident in several ways:

- 1) Use and overuse in certain areas of existing facilities
- 2) Private sector initiatives taken to address urgent needs
- 3) Decreasing practicability of multi-purpose fields
- 4) Formation and growth of City youth leagues.

Overuse of existing soccer fields is readily apparent at several parks including Townwood and Burnet Bayland. At Townwood Park, soccer fields overlap onto adjacent private property. The associated parking “field” and its gated access from a public street are also located on private property.

The need for additional fields is also reflected in the use hours currently seen. Many lighted fields remain in use until 11:00 P.M. and would likely extend later if allowed. In some areas, youth league practice play does not even begin until after 8:30 P.M. A number of school sites, especially inside Loop 610, are used for league play as well as school play resulting in overuse of the fields with increasingly more bare soil than grass evident.

In response, several private initiatives are underway. The *Stella Link Redevelopment Association* is working with major youth sports organizations including the Braes Bayou and West University Little Leagues, Southwest YMCA, West University Soccer Club, and Youth Softball Association, to secure additional field space for youth sports. These organizations attract thousands of young people from Stella Link, Rice University, the Medical Center, Braeswood Place, Bellaire, West University and surrounding areas. The Association has already acquired two large sites to alleviate the need. The north site is a 40 acre tract on Stella Link inside the Loop. In addition to sports fields, the site will include a new YMCA, Houston Public Library, Sheltering Arms Senior Services Center, and Helen’s Park (a planned passive park). The southern site is a 75 acre tract on Stella

Link just outside the Loop at Bellfort. This site is proposed to include 8 soccer fields as well as 8 Little League baseball fields, 1 Senior League ball field, 4 softball fields, concession stand, restrooms and storage facility, playground for younger children, volleyball courts and jogging trail. Land acquisition and first phase development costs for the southern site are estimated at \$3.8 million. An intensive fundraising program has already begun.

A second private initiative is underway within the portion of Houston in Fort Bend County. The *Ridgegate Community Improvement Association* has prepared a park master plan for a 19 acre site, which includes a 15 acre tract donated by Chevron. Proposed facilities include soccer fields as well as a community center, gymnasium, soccer fields, 2 Little League baseball fields, 2 tennis courts, outdoor basketball court, and a playground.

Further exacerbating the need for more sports fields is the fact that activities such as softball and soccer are now year-round. This brings into question the practicability of multi-purpose fields intended for both sports. Austin, Dallas, and Fort Worth are no longer developing multi-purpose fields due to overuse and conflicts in use, conflicts caused by softball fencing, and poor lighting coverage. All three cities are returning to single-use fields. Houston parks currently contain a number of multi-purpose fields already having conflicts between youth soccer and other sports such as baseball, softball, football and even adult soccer.

Supply and demand for soccer fields were fairly equal in the years preceding the formation of the City youth sports leagues. However, introduction of the City leagues, while welcome, has substantially increased demand without an equal increase in supply. Inside the Loop, several existing private leagues can no longer count on using several parks because of the need to accommodate City leagues.

Additional factors affecting the situation include the following:

- 1) In keeping with this Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the neighborhood park has been redefined to provide a better balance of passive and active uses. Lighted ballfields and/or tournament quality fields are now considered inappropriate in close proximity to residences.
- 2) Many of the City's existing large parks, such as Memorial, are wooded, and many citizens would object to further removal of forested areas to provide sports fields.

A final concern regards the long-term stability of existing private, nonprofit sport complexes. Most are found in the western half of the City. Some sites are owned by the sports organizations; however, other sites appear to be leased. Ballfields at leased sites may be considered an interim use by the property owner, subject to change as urban development increases. For many years, private, nonprofit sport complexes have served recreational needs usually provided by a city. Consequently, the City of Houston should consider assistance to these organizations, perhaps in the form of tax incentives, to ensure their long-term survival or, in some cases, buy the sites.

Solutions

Alleviating the current shortage of soccer fields and meeting projected future needs will take both immediate and long-term solutions. Immediate recommendations include the following:

- Light overcrowded fields at Alief, Burnett Bayland, Clark and Ingrando Parks.
- Expand the number of soccer fields in several existing community and regional parks. Potential sites include Alief, Ingrado, and West Little York Parks.
- Place new fields at several undeveloped park sites, specifically, Tony Marron and Stuebner-Airline.

Long-term solutions include acquisition and development of a number of community and regional parkland acquisitions and existing site expansions. A total of 28 sites have been identified across the City, of which six are intended principally for soccer fields. Listed below are the sites by sector.

<u>Sector</u>	<u>Soccer Field Sites</u>
Central	11
Southeast	2
Southwest	6
West	2
Northwest	4
Northeast	2
Far Northeast	1

Collectively, these new or improved soccer field sites will address the following issues:

- Meet park and recreation standards
- Resolve existing conflicts with other sports
- Relieve overuse of existing fields
- Relocate tournament fields out of neighborhood parks

Recreation Centers

The City of Houston currently has 57 community/ recreation centers classified by the following types:

- Neighborhood (Ex: Cherryhurst)
- Program (Ex: Eastwood)
- Community I (Ex: Beverly Hills)
- Community II (Ex: Sunnyside)
- Regional (Ex: Fonde)

Neighborhood and program-type centers are the smallest and among the oldest. Several were built during the Great Depression by the Works Progress Administration. Community I type parks are larger with adjoining outdoor basketball pavilions. Community II types include an indoor gymnasium. Regional centers, provide the largest recreational facilities and serve a much greater population.

Based on the geographic distribution of all existing recreation centers, an additional 10 centers are needed for areas not currently served in which at least 20,000 people reside. The current total population of areas without recreation centers is in excess of 560,000. The 10 new centers are each described in the table below by their proposed location, their general service area, their type (Community or Regional) and the Council district where they would be located. Please note that Sites D and E will likely have to be located in community-sized parks because of the lack of regional-sized sites.

RECREATION CENTER NEEDS					
Site	General Service Area	Estimated Service Area Population	Type	Proposed Location	Council District
A	Greenspoint	42,805	Com.	To be determined by TIRZ	B
B	NW of US 290 & Antoine (Greater Inwood Area)	51,000	Com.	Proposed community park site	A
C	West Belt/Bingle Northwest Fwy/Katy Fwy	82,000	Reg.	Proposed regional park site	A
D	SH 6/West Belt Katy Fwy/Alief Clodine Rd	118,000	Reg.	Proposed community park site	G
E	West Belt/West Loop Katy Fwy/Westpark	103,000	Reg.	Briarbend Park Area	G
F	Fort Bend County	33,000	Com.	To be determined	D
G	Hiram Clark/SH 288 S. Main/S. Belt	20,000	Com.	Expanded Townwood Park	D
H	S Houston/Pasadena city limits Gulf Fwy/South Belt	25,000	Com.	Wilson Memorial Park	E
I	Far East Houston (East Fwy & Maxey)	33,000	Com.	Maxey Park	I
J	Kingwood	53,000	Com.	To be determined	E

Existing and proposed recreation centers are indicated on Figure 19. Also depicted are the semi-public, nonprofit recreation centers identified in the inventory of existing parks and recreational facilities. They include the Quillian Pavilion in west Houston near Beltway 8, the Jewish Community Center in Meyerland, and the Clear Lake Recreation Center in the Clear Lake City area. Varying size service areas are shown for each type for comparative purposes. Neighborhood type and Program type facilities are indicated with a one-mile service radius as associated with a neighborhood park. Community Centers and semi-public recreation centers are shown with a two mile radius as associated with a community park, and Regional Centers with a three mile radius.

As noted in the standards-based criteria, Houston standards recommend one community center per 30,000 residents (without regard to geographic distribution). Based on the 1997 estimated population of 1,870,533, Houston has a ratio of one community center per 32,816 persons. (Note: Census 2000 data not yet available at time of printing.) The table below provides the ratio per geographic sector as currently exists and with the additional 10 centers.

Sector	Population	Existing Centers	Current Ratio	Proposed Centers	Ratio After
Central	408,430	26	1:15,709	0	1:15,710
Southeast	269,275	9	1:29,919	1	1:26,927
Southwest	430,667	9	1:47,852	2	1:39,152
West	347,252	2	1:173,626	2	1:86,813
Northwest	221,124	6	1:36,854	2	1:27,641
Northeast	116,703	5	1:23,341	1	1:19,451
Far Northeast	77,082	0	-	1	1:77,002
	1,870,533	57		10	

The 10 new centers, if all built tomorrow, would improve the city-wide ratio to one per 28,341. By the year 2010, the ratio would remain within the accepted standard at one per 29,621, based on a projected population of 1,955,000.

Because freestanding recreation centers are capital-intensive undertakings with high operation and maintenance costs, alternatives to provide recreation programs in less time and expense should be considered. For example, recreation programs and activities could be provided in partnership with school districts or other nonprofit organizations such as the YMCA that may already have facilities in place.

The Parks and Recreation Department has established a working relationship with the Houston Independent School District to utilize school facilities while existing centers are undergoing renovation. Classrooms and gymnasiums are used for recreation classes and activities during evening and weekend hours when school is not in session. The City provides staffing. School-based recreation centers are an affordable way to provide start-up service in areas of Houston not currently served. Subsequent changes in demand and participation levels over a period of months or years can then be used as a means to measure the need for a freestanding center.

Where opportunities to work with other facility-providing organizations cannot be arranged, the City should seek a joint venture partner to help develop a recreation center. One such opportunity may be at hand. The Ridgeway neighborhood in Fort Bend County is constructing a community center with future plans for a gymnasium. The 33,000 Houstonians living in Fort Bend County do not have convenient access to recreation programs. Hence, the opportunity may exist for the City to initiate a joint venture agreement with the Ridgeway Community Improvement Association so that this facility is available to all nearby Houstonians. In other parts of the City, joint venture partners could include YMCA's/YWCA's or the City's Department of Health and Human Services.

If no partnerships can be arranged, market surveys and public hearings should be undertaken to assess demand accurately prior to any facility planning and development activities.

Swimming Pools

Rehabilitation and/or replacement of existing City pools is the greatest current need. Many, older pools are in desperate need of repair, leaking large amounts of water along with pool chemicals.

The following criteria have been used to help assess needs:

- 1) Proximity of other public pools
- 2) Pool usage in recent months, and years, if available
- 3) Changes in neighborhood demographics or land use
- 4) Advantages and disadvantages of current location

Use of these criteria could also provide a justifiable means to close an existing pool. One example is Levy Pool where recent daily attendance has averaged 31 swimmers, the neighborhood is changing to include upscale apartments with their own pools, and the nearest City pool, Dunlavy, is less than two miles away.

A secondary need identified is for a centrally located, Olympic quality natatorium that can offer a full range of aquatic programs. The demand for indoor pools has also been seen in Austin, Dallas, and San Antonio. Such a facility will be required should Houston be successful with its bid for the 2012 Olympics. No suitable natatorium currently exists in the City.

The City currently has 43 outdoor swimming pools. Figure 6.13 shows the locations of existing parks with pools as well as the Williams Park Natatorium in the Clear Lake area that is owned by the City but privately operated. Each pool is depicted with a 2-mile service radius to help identify gaps in service. Also individually shown are all private neighborhood parks and YMCA/YWCA's with pools. Private neighborhood parks are most prevalent in Alief, Briarforest/Memorial, Clear Lake Area, Eldridge/West Oaks, Fondren Southwest, Fort Bend County, Greater Inwood, and Kingwood Super Neighborhoods.

Given the existing distribution of both public and private pools, there are few readily apparent areas not currently served. The principal area unserved is the near southwest portion including Braeswood, South Main, and Willowbend neighborhoods. But these neighborhoods will be specifically served by the previously mentioned Stella Link Redevelopment Association initiative, which will include a new YMCA pool and community pool at the northern site and an olympic-sized competition pool at the southern site.

While private neighborhood pools may be numerous in the neighborhoods identified above, the concern arises that not all area residents are being served. For example, according to residents in the Fondren area, several apartment pools have been filled in because of children-related liability issues. While it is difficult to ascertain whether there

is sufficient critical mass remaining in these “mostly” served areas to justify building a municipal pool, the need for additional pools was not expressed either in the community meetings or public survey.

Golf

Based on public input, no new municipal golf courses are needed. Given the number of daily fee, open to the public golf courses recently announced or completed, it would appear that the demand for golf is generally being met by the private sector throughout most of the region. Figure 6.14 shows the distribution of public and private golf courses throughout the metropolitan area, including the City's eight parks with courses. The City's newest golf course at Law Park in southeast Houston is a nine-hole executive, par three type course with driving range and classrooms serving inner city youth. This facility is intended to accommodate the City's highly successful junior golf program, largely funded by grants and donations.

Tennis

The City currently has three tennis centers. Attendance, program participation, and revenue generation at existing centers indicate no need for additional multi-court tennis facilities. Schools throughout the City and private tennis clubs in the western half of the City appear to be meeting demand.

PARK MAINTENANCE FACILITIES

The park system cannot be maintained without adequate maintenance facilities located where needed and properly sized to house manpower, materials and equipment. Current facilities include housing staff in old stables and leaving equipment outside where it deteriorates quickly. Thus, the two principal needs are the following:

- 1) Replace and/or relocate facilities in poor condition or that are poorly located.
- 2) Alleviate current extreme travel times that impact manpower efficiency.

Meeting these needs will require construction of seven new maintenance facilities as detailed below and shown on Figure 6.15.

Existing Facilities

Listed below are the City's existing park maintenance facilities by geographical area. The condition of each facility has been rated as good, fair, or poor based on City staff comments.

Facility	Address	Key Map	Condition
Northeast			
Brown, Herman	11600 Wallisville	456X	Good
Cliff Tuttle	6200 Lyons	494H	Poor
Keith Wiess	8002 Airline	413T	Poor
Moody	3800 Fulton	453Y	Fair
Tidwell	9500 Compton	454D	Poor
Northwest			
Cullen	18203 Groeschke	447P	Good
Langwood	6311 Saxon	451P	Fair
Memorial	6501 Memorial	492K	Fair
Southwest			
Bissonnet	8910 Bissonnet	530T	Good
Hermann	6520 Alameda	533F	Good
Southeast			
Clear Lake	16830 Diana	618P	Good
Milby	2121 Central	535L	Good
Sims	9500 MLK	574E	Poor
Downtown			
Tranquility Park Parking Garage	502 Rusk	493L	Fair

The Tuttle, Wiess, and Tidwell facilities are comprised of portable buildings, trailers and sheds. The Sims facility is an old wooden structure located in the Sims Bayou flood plain. The site flooded in 1994. Langwood is inappropriately located in a neighborhood park and its operation has caused complaints from nearby residents. The Tranquility Park site, although well located, was never intended to be a maintenance facility. It is limited in size, layout and storage capacity. Rental of the space costs the Department about \$6,600 annually.

Time and travel patterns were also reviewed for each facility with respect to its current service zone. Extreme travel times are apparent in three areas:

- From Hermann, southwest outside the Loop to beyond the Belt into Fort Bend County
- From Tidwell, northeast to the Kingwood area
- From Cullen, southeast toward Westheimer and Gessner

Although considered extreme, travel times from Cullen cannot be readily alleviated because the service area is all to the southeast of the facility location and the facility itself is one of the newest.

Recommendations

Sector	Recommendation	Suggested Location(s)	Council District
Southwest	Alleviate the extreme travel times from Hermann by constructing a new maintenance facility to serve areas outside the South Loop and extending into Fort Bend County.	Cambridge Village (regional) Park	D
Far Northeast	Alleviate the extreme travel times from Tidwell by constructing a new maintenance facility, to serve the Airport and Kingwood areas, or as an interim solution, outsource park and street right-of-way maintenance.	1) Undeveloped Edmonds park site. 2) Proposed Kingwood community park	B E
Southeast	Relocate Sims out of the flood plain and eastward toward Mykawa and Airport Blvd. and then include in its district the southernmost portion of the existing Milby district.	Law (regional) park	E
Northwest	Relocate Langwood out of a neighborhood park and residential area	Nearby commercial and industrial areas (possibly in leased facilities)	A
Northeast	Combine Wiess with Tidwell and construct a new facility in a nonresidential setting.	Keith Wiess (metro) Park	B
Central	Relocate Tuttle south of the East Freeway in order to better serve the bayou linear park system and assist, if needed, the Downtown District.	1) Proposed regional park on Buffalo Bayou (coordinate with Buffalo Bayou Partnership) 2) Tony Marron (community) park	H
West	Construct a new facility to alleviate long travel times from Cullen, if the City annexes additional land to the west which the Cullen District would serve.	Industrial area near the Katy Freeway and West Belt	A

Traditionally, park maintenance facilities have been located in parks despite their commercial/industrial character. Unless well screened and buffered, maintenance facilities can be detrimental to a quality park environment, especially in a smaller park. Maintenance facilities should not be located within neighborhood or small community parks, or near existing homes. Well located, existing commercial/industrial buildings no longer in use could provide a more affordable first option. Long-term leases should also be considered.

PARKS HEADQUARTERS

The current headquarters facility on Wayside Drive has outlived its useful life. A new facility is greatly needed that will allow Parks and Recreation Department staff to operate and function in reasonably adequate space. This need is one that would not be expected to arise from community meetings or public surveys. The building currently occupied by the Department does have historical significance in that it was the first home of the manned space program.